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AUTHOR:

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WESLEY

TITLE:

ON THE
INCOMPATIBILITY OF...

PLACE:

PHILADELPHIA

DATE:

1872

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Protestant Episcopal church in the U.S. Virginia
On the incompatibility of theater-going and
holding with membership in the Christian church;
an address of the clergy of the Convocation of
the Valley of Virginia to the people of their
respective parishes. Philadelphia, Office of
Leighton publications, 1878.
81 p. 17 cm.

150070

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35 mm REDUCTION RATIO: 11 X
IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA (IIA) IB IIB
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FILMED BY: RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS, INC WOODBRIDGE, CT

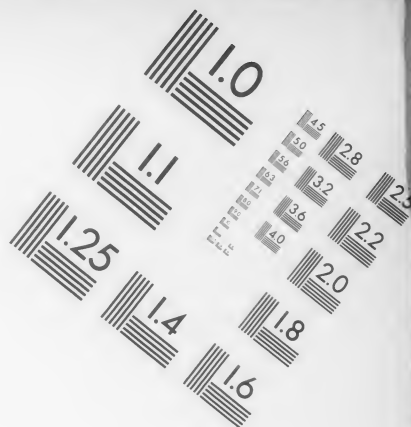
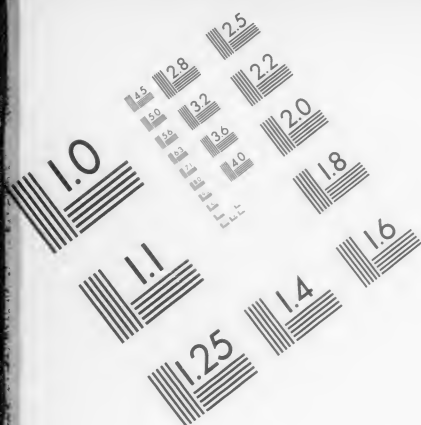


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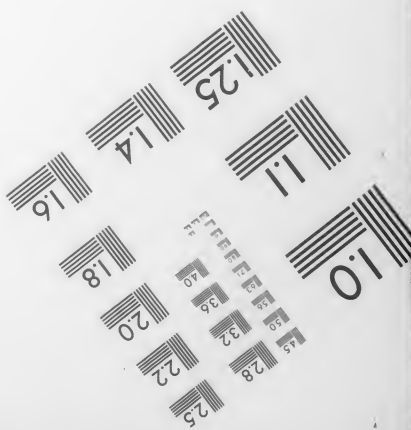
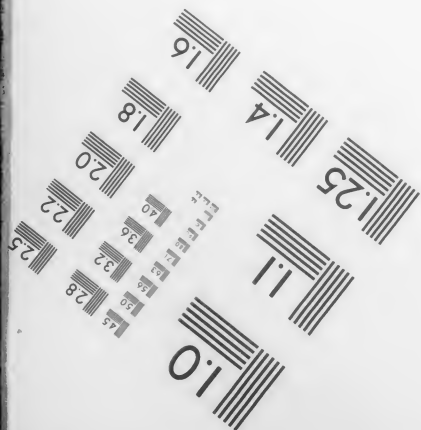
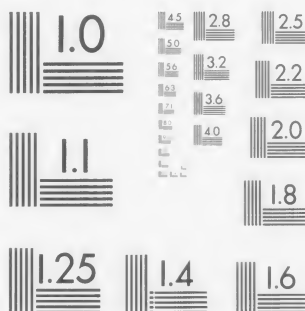
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THE INCOMPATIBILITY
OF
THEATER-GOING AND DANCING
WITH
MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

OFFICE OF LEIGHTON PUBLICATIONS,
1225 SANSOM STREET,
PHILADELPHIA.

Protestant Episcopal church
in the U.S. - Virginia.

ON THE

INCOMPATIBILITY

OF

THEATER-GOING AND DANCING

WITH

MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

AN ADDRESS OF THE CLERGY

OF THE

CONVOCATION OF THE VALLEY OF VIRGINIA,

TO THE

PEOPLE OF THEIR RESPECTIVE PARISHES.

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NOTE.

It was stated in the first edition of this tract, that it did not aspire to circulation beyond the congregations for which it was prepared. But as it has been largely called for by brethren elsewhere, including ministers of other denominations having like cause of complaint, and equally concerned for the purity of the Church, this new and revised edition is put forth, in the hope (which is to some extent warranted by experience) that it will prove the means of better instruction to some who are, or may become candidates for admission to the Church, and possibly a means of recovery to some who have fallen, and be otherwise useful at a time when so many seem to be but very imperfectly acquainted with what the vows taken in baptism and confirmation imply.

I.

THE THEATER.

We start with the proposition that the THEATER *has been through its whole history, and is now, a school of vice.* If this be *true*, the question must be at an end with all who have any claim to the Christian character. Is it true? The facts alleged in proof are, that its literature is often of immoral tendency, corrupt and corrupting, both in sentiment and principle. Its performances are not unfrequently characterized by irreverence and profanity, religion being made a subject for merriment, if not of derision. Vice is whitewashed and virtually commended. The name of God is blasphemously used, and piety ridiculed. Not only do the more popular plays abound with low innuendo and double entendre, with the usual accompaniment of the ballet, which no Christian can witness, but the grossest indecencies are the ordinary exhibition of the stage—such as immodest dances, with exposure of the female person, which are the known incentives to licentiousness and crime—so that the theater is, as it always has been, the habitual resort of the irreligious and of the immoral. It is the expressed opinion of no less an authority than Sir Walter Scott, in his Essays on the Drama, that no man of delicacy would wish to expose the females of his family, or youth of the male sex, to

what they must witness at a theater. Touching the London stage, he testifies distinctly to the fact that, except in cases of some extraordinary attraction, "persons of immoral character usually form the principal part of the audience": so that no theater-goer can say that he does not stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful.

To the shame of the modern apologists for the stage, the testimonies to its corrupting influences are coeval with its existence as found in Plato, Xenophon, Tacitus, Seneca, and many others. Ovid, himself, not the best example of heathen morality, urged the Emperor Augustus to suppress it, as a great source of corruption to the State.

Added to this, we have, as might have been expected, an unbroken line of testimony against it from the professed teachers of morals and religion, in the shape of protests, censures, recorded judgments and condemnatory sentences of the Church, in not less than fifty-four Councils and Synods, general and provincial, both of the East and West, with numerous decrees excluding play-actors and their patrons from the communion. The opinions of the ancient Fathers and Christian writers, to the number of seventy or more, have been collected out of their works: and of modern authors, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, not less than one hundred and fifty have condemned the theater, as of dangerous and often fatal influence upon society. And these authorities are by no means confined to the public teachers of religion, but embrace writers upon morals, philosophers, poets, jurists, physicians, lawyers and legislators. Their testimonies and opinions would make

a book. Even the infidel Rosseau wondered how a father could take his daughter to the theaters of Paris, which were so congenial to vice that during the Reign of Terror they increased from six to twenty-five.

On the 12th of October, 1778, the Congress of the United States adopted the following resolution:—

"Whereas, true religion and good morals are the only foundation of liberty and happiness,

"Resolved, That it be and is hereby recommended to the several States, to take the most effectual measures for the encouragement thereof, and for suppressing theatrical entertainments, horse racing, gaming, and such other diversions as are productive of idleness, dissipation and a general depravity of morals." There were but eighteen dissenting votes, while those in the affirmative numbered the most illustrious names of the House—Adams, Gerry, Sherman, Ellsworth, Robert Morris, Dean, Richard Henry Lee and Henry Laurens. We have also the testimony of merchants and leading men in the business community, concerning numbers of young men once in their employment, and who promised to be their successors, who have been brought to disgrace and ruin by the theater. So far, then, as the *past* is concerned, nobody denies it, and nobody defends it.

But we are told, "The stage is reformed, become a school of noble sentiments, and a teacher of morals," etc.—the common subterfuge of its apologists from the beginning, who, unable to discredit history, have found it easier to contradict what has not yet become embodied in that form. It was this very plea which Bishop Collier encountered at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when he wrote his famous history

of the stage. None justified what *had been*, but only what was then alleged to be an improved state of things, and with which divines were presumed not to be acquainted. The former panderings to evil passions had ceased. But Collier was not a man to be silenced either by plausible fictions or by positiveness. He proceeded to collect the facts, undeniable and undenied, in proof that in 1710 the English stage was more corrupt than in any former period of its history. That history was for the most part unknown to its apologists and defenders, and they had little sensibility to current facts, so long as those facts were unknown or uncensured by the moral world without the precincts of the theater. So of the late assaults of the secular press upon a minister for refusing to bury an actor, dying, so far as appeared, unbaptized and impenitent, according to the burial service of the Episcopal Church. It usually prefaces its attacks with assertions about a reformed theater. We have a short answer ready at hand in the counter assertions so often made and accompanied by the *proofs* of their truth, many of them unfit for recital in this address, giving the names of those plays and performances which attract the greatest crowds, not only in Paris and London, but in *our own cities*. We are told of the abolished third tier, but what is the gain to virtue from having its former occupants scattered among the boxes? It is idle to tell us of the elevated sentiments of the drama, perhaps in the Age of Elizabeth or James I, when none will pretend that anything of this sort now attracts the multitude. Those who have looked most into the literature and facts of play-acting, ancient and modern, tell us that the inde-

cencies of the present would not have been tolerated in the corrupt age of Charles II, and that the immorality of the stage is more gross *now* than when Collier wrote his history. Added to this, as might have been expected, the judgment of the world, as represented by the secular press, is proportionally demoralized.

Christians must beware of the thoroughly worldly spirit of the secular press. With no higher standard than it inculcates, religion would soon be driven out of the world. Through this channel it will not be known that no sooner is a theater built than it is surrounded with drinking-houses and brothels, which mark it as the way to perdition; that the profession of the stage is notoriously immoral. Actors and actresses who come before the public and receive their applause, are living in daily defiance of the laws of decency and morality. The exceptions to this rule are so rare that they excite general surprise and comment. Christians must have better sources of information upon these subjects than the secular press.

If actors and actresses are excluded from the society of some of their patrons on account of their profession, let it be remembered that both are upon the same moral level before God. That which it is immoral or shameful in one party to *do*, is immoral and shameful in any party to go and see done.

But many professed Christians think it vulgar to go to a theater, yet they can attend the opera.

The vice of the opera may be more subtle and difficult of apprehension, but it is not the less destructive on that account. The following is the testimony of one than whom none ever better knew what the opera is,

or what is its effect upon character: "It is the most artificial of all things. It subsists, not in the imitation of nature, but in contempt of nature. At a theater you may see or hear what has possibly been said or done somewhere, but in an opera you are sure to see what was never said or done anywhere but in an opera. The ear is cloyed with warbled ecstasies or agonies, while every avenue to painful fear or effective sympathy is stopped up. Everything must be made to excite and soothe the feelings of the nurselings of fortune. Tortured victims swoon on beds of roses, and the pangs of despair sink in tremulous accents into downy repose. Just so much of human misery is given as to lull those who are exempt from it into a more luxurious sense of their own happiness. Its whole effect is to stifle every proper emotion, and intercept every right feeling before it reaches the heart, so that there is hardly a vice to which it does not smooth the way, or a single virtue of which it renders the soft and pampered hearer entirely capable."

It is little to say that the religion of the cross of Christ cannot flourish in an atmosphere like this—it *cannot live at all*.

Touching the judgment of the Protestant Episcopal Church, there is no dispute. We have it in resolutions of the General Convention, and in this diocese a special canon provides for the discipline of those who fall into this sin. In this view of the case the Church has a right to expect at the hands of its ministers the exercise of its discipline. And it is in the city churches that judgment must *begin*. It is in these churches that the patronage of the theater is common; in some

it is *less* common, from the generally higher standard of piety, but in *none*, so far as we are informed, does it incur suspension from the communion. The members of country churches visiting cities in winter soon learn this, and enticed by the example of city communicants, fall into their sin. These, in turn, going into the country parishes in summer, have been the chief instruments of leading the young communicants of those parishes into sinful compliances with the world, quoting their own pastors against those of the parishes in which they were guests.

What shall we say of such tolerated conformity to the habits of those who are "living in pleasure"? Can that Church be a spiritual society in which discipline takes notice of nothing short of that which subjects the offender to a civil prosecution? We are ashamed and confounded at witnessing quarrels and censures about the violation of "ordination vows" in mere matters of rubrical direction, or the prerogatives of the clergy, while the promise "to minister the discipline of Christ as this Church hath received the same," seems to be entirely forgotten—"tithing mint, anise and cummin, while passing over judgment and the love of God."

There is but one way of safety for any of us, and that is by preaching in love, with all courage and perseverance, the whole truth; with specific statements, after the manner of Christ and his apostles, of the sins which we preach against. This will convert some, induce others to withdraw, leaving the cases for final discipline so few as to render its exercise comparatively easy.

II.

ON THE CHRISTIAN PATRONAGE OF DANCING.

Though the moral evils of dancing, in some of its forms, be not so great as those which result from theater going, the unlearned reader will be surprised to find that the moral warfare against this also dates back from before the Christian era. Suffer us, therefore, to call your attention to

1. *The argument from authority.* The earlier Greek and Roman moralists classified dancing with play-acting, as in this Address, and condemned both on substantially the same grounds. Plato, Aristotle, Livy and Cicero are quoted as its censors. They held it as not only productive of moral evils, but as indicating a low grade of character. When Cato charged Murena, the Roman Consul, with having danced in Capadocia, Cicero considered the charge so disgraceful to his client, that had he been unable to disprove it, he would have abandoned his cause. "Blush then," said Cardinal

(12)

Bellarmino to the Christian apologists for dancing, "when a pagan has thought more sanely on this subject than you, and lest that pagan condemn you in the judgment day." In the civil code of Theodosius it is subjected to censure by the State; as also by Council after Council of the Christian Church, by whose decisions dancers as well as play-actors were excluded from the communion. Basil, Ambrose, Augustine, with the fathers and doctors of the Early Church so far as known, were of the same mind about this practice.

St. Chrysostom entreated his hearers "not to disqualify themselves for the communion by such mortal diversions." Tertullian said that "if Christians were found in the assemblies of the dancers, it proved them to be no longer true Christians." The Church of Rome, by no means remarkable for severity in matters of worldly amusement, has produced a host of witnesses against dancing, derived from its history in all forms, no regard being paid to its being more or less *public*, as there is no distinction in principle. The authorities may be seen at length in the work of the Abbé Hulot, entitled "Balls and dancing parties condemned by Scripture, Holy Fathers, Holy Councils and most renowned theologians of the Church." The drift of that work is to show that while some of its forms are enough to rouse evil passions in an anchorite, all of them are corrupting to the lower classes of society; while in every class and with all their participants, whoever they may be, they are more or less unfriendly to that command of God, the violation of which goes more directly than any other to the very heart of social life.

And when we see that Church from which we once separated, as well for "viciousness of life" as for "error in religion," not only censuring the licentious dance in synods, but effectually extruding it by discipline, we are filled with profound mortification at seeing it pass without notice in Churches called evangelical. Are the Protestant Churches falling in the rear of Romanists in consistency of the Christian life? The distinguished infidel Bayle once said of them—"The Reformed Churches which forbid dancing cannot be sufficiently praised for it, since the manner of it creates a thousand impressions dangerous to virtue."

But there is, in fact, a like consensus of judgment among all Protestant writers who have treated of "poms and vanities;" and rules for the most part have been adopted adequate to their repression. In this diocese, the XIX Canon specifies not only attendance upon "theatrical exhibitions," but "public balls," as offenses for which those guilty of them should be suspended from the communion. The responsibility now rests on those who do not enforce the rules made and provided.

But what are "*public Balls*?" The Church has given no definition, nor has it defined "poms and vanities." In rubrics and offices which continue unchanged for centuries, the terms are general, and for this reason—to have made them specific by enumerating the particulars of those current at any one time, necessarily leaving new developments unprovided for, would have opened the way for the advocates of license to claim that rule of interpretation which holds in the

civil law, that whatsoever is not prohibited is allowed. The work of applying general principles to the correction of current forms of sin belongs to the legislation and discipline of the Church for the time being.

In the Bible we find first general laws, as in the decalogue, and in such forms as the following:—*Be ye holy. Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Abstain from all appearance of evil, hating even the garments spotted by the flesh;* and we find also *some* specifications, doubtless the chief of the vanities incompatible with the Christian profession then current, even to those of the fashions of female dress and of wearing the hair by the worldly and frivolous of that day. (See 1 Tim. ii, 13). It is so in the legislation of the Church. We have general laws, and we have *some* specifications. These are added to or altered from time to time, as circumstances may require. It would be vain to search the Scriptures for a prohibition of the poms and vanities of the present day, such as have been prohibited either by resolutions of the General Convention or by Diocesan Canons, for they did not exist when the Bible was written. Theatrical exhibitions were unknown in Judea until introduced by Herod, that illustrious wretch who sought the life of the infant Saviour, and then it was against the protests of the native population, who could never be reconciled to them, much less were they named among them as becoming saints.

No rubric or canon can include every form of vanity for which discipline should be exercised, as this particular canon declares concerning itself, that it shall

not be so considered. There are those now in the Church, as there always have been, who in worldly conformity will go to the utmost limit of the law.* Tertullian speaks of these same troublers of Israel in his day, who were always hanging upon the borders of discipline, and must needs have a *specific text* for every vanity they were called upon to surrender. Consequently, now, as in the first Christian Societies, and as it always must be, questions arise which in their details must be decided by those entrusted with the discipline of the local churches for the time being, of course under general laws, the subjects of discipline meanwhile being entitled to appeal.

When the question is asked what are "public Balls," we answer, without regarding those refinements which are unworthy of a Christian, they are all those assemblages and parties where promiscuous dancing is carried on by the two sexes, and not less for being in a private house. This is the view taken in the Report of the Committee on the state of the Church in the Council of 1866, which was directed, by a unanimous vote, to be read in all the Churches of the Diocese.

Such, in brief, is the argument from authority, which certainly must have some weight with such as "lean not to their own understanding." But had it even been otherwise, and councils and doctors have been divided

*It is related of a Prince, that wishing to employ a charioteer, he examined the applicants by asking how near they could drive to the edge of a precipice without going over. The first said within so many inches. The second could go still nearer. The third said he did not know, as he always made it a point to keep away from such places. The choice between such was easily made.

or adverse in judgment, still the moral argument would be held as conclusive.

We have then to consider

2. *The moral argument.* By the moral argument, we mean that which is drawn from the nature of the case, without regard to laws, or promises to obey them. And here we take dancing not in some supposable or occasional circumstances; but with its actual history, its ordinary associations and its known tendencies. We compare this with the picture drawn in Scripture of the Christian life, and in this view appeal to conscience when in its tenderest and best state. What are its own decisions? What the real promptings of a regenerate mind? What the decision of those in closest sympathy with the life of Christ? This is the decision which we desire, as most decisive of the moral argument and of the practical question. For so long as rubrics and canons for the exclusion of pomps and vanities from the Church are looked upon simply as coercive; or like positive institutions, the reasons for which are not seen or felt to be moral, intrinsic and necessary, just so long will they encounter a disputatious and resistive spirit. But however numerous or conclusive such reasons may be to a spiritual mind, it is antecedently probable that in the present state of the Church they will not be appreciated by all its members. Otherwise laws were unnecessary, since they are not made for the righteous, but for those in whom is the spirit of transgression, and concerning whom it may be counted upon beforehand, that the restraints of law will be distasteful, and if possible, set aside.

When, therefore, rules are cited and applied to worldliness in its less palpable forms, we constantly encounter this reply, "I cannot see any harm in it." We show them in the plainest manner the evil effect of this worldliness, both upon themselves and upon the Church; but they see as little as before, and go on repeating, "I cannot see any harm in it; show me what harm there can be in a dancing party, or in playing cards, if we don't gamble; and would not this be better than slandering one's neighbors," etc., etc.

When, after a full and clear statement of the case, with time for reflection, the objector still continues in the same strain, we have only to say that we withdraw from the controversy, all hope of success being at an end. There is no basis for conviction. Submit a problem in the higher mathematics to one unacquainted with that science, and it is quite unintelligible to him. He asks an explanation; but in order to do this, you must employ terms of which he does not know the meaning. Your explanation is as obscure as the original proposition. You must begin with him at the very rudiments of the science, for which he may or may not have the disposition.

So in our religious instructions we constantly meet with those who have no definite ideas respecting the pomps and vanities renounced at their baptism, and to whom it seems impossible to impart any. To such we must fail in all endeavors to show them the "harm" in these things. We cannot impart to them a spiritual understanding; or cause them to discern sin, except in its grosser forms, which the world itself condemns. It

is so with respect to many Christian judgments and duties; *e. g.* our Lord says "it is better to give than to receive," and every child of God accepts it as a truth. But one replies "I do not think so, my experience tells me that it is better to receive than to give," and we have no more to say. So we see morbid symptoms in the body, which it is useless to treat directly. They come from an unsound constitution. Let this be renovated, and those symptoms will disappear without any treatment at all.

Do we then set down as unconverted all who are unable to "see the harm" of these things, and regard the inability as itself the proof that they are destitute of spiritual discernment?

The question of another's being in a state of salvation is a question which one hesitates to decide under any circumstances, even in his own thoughts, even where appearances are most discouraging. Charity hopes, or replies, "the Lord knoweth." But so far as we do form a judgment, it must be in accordance with our Saviour's rule, "*by their fruits ye shall know them; do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*" taking as an aid to judge of these fruits, the general voice of the Church in past ages. In this view we have to say of those within the scope of our observation, who after due endeavors for their conviction have still professed their inability to "see any harm" in these and such like things, and have continued to be the defenders of dancing, whether they practiced it or not, that in no instance have they been persons who, on other grounds, and apart from this particular question, have given

satisfactory evidence of being born of the Spirit (Gal. v, 22), or whom we should have thought of with comfort in the day of their death. To give less than our real convictions upon such a subject, derived as they have been from observation and the Word of God, would be to deal unfaithfully with those whom we thus address, those who, as the Apostle says, "are dear to us," and for whom we shall be held in some sort responsible at the final day.

But, inasmuch as some have been convinced by the moral argument, our hope is that by its repetition we may convince more.

(1.) The most plausible plea for dancing which we have seen (and it comes from one of whom, as of some of the late apologists for the theater, the Church had a right to expect better things), and for such like things, was founded upon this proposition, "Play is as natural as work," from which it was argued that "people must have amusements, and that it was the duty of the Church to supply its members with amusements," in which the rule is moderation, not prohibition. But this rule of moderation manifestly applies only to things lawful, whereas the question about dancing is whether it *be* lawful for a Christian, all things considered. Touching this alleged or admitted necessity for amusements, there are surely resources enough to occupy all the leisure which a Christian should have in a world like this, from the more serious pursuits of life; things which are healthful and properly enough called amusements in art, lectures, lyceums, music, painting, poetry, the social converse, the culture of fruits and flowers,

riding and walking, with thoughts which are everywhere suggested by the works of God in nature. The range, including sports for children, all of which come within the bounds of unquestioned propriety, is endless.

But if by amusements be meant such "popular amusements" as are now under consideration, or which have at any time incurred the censure of the Church, we are at a loss to know by what authority of Scripture, either in its text or its spirit, this proposition that Christians must have amusements, can be sustained. On the contrary we know that it cannot be sustained. St. James' prescription for those who are "merry" and seek some suitable expression for their feelings, would probably be received with ridicule by those Christians who demand this liberty of dancing.

We are almost constantly asked by the advocates for this practice whether it be "wrong in itself" or "wrong in the abstract." If those magic words "in itself," which appear to puzzle only those who use them, refer only to the bodily movement, the question is childish, and if by "abstract" be meant abstraction from its antecedents, accompaniments, and consequences, it is almost equally childish, for it does not *exist* in that shape. There *is* no such dancing. You never see a person go into a private room, alone, and there dance by himself, which is the most reasonable conception we can form of "dancing, in the abstract."

Then again, this general proposition that "people must have amusements," makes no distinction in *kind*, but only in *degree*, between the joys of the children of

God and the children of this world; nor does it give any higher standard of indulgence than worldly prudence, which condemns only that which "Society," at any one time or place has agreed to denominate *excess*; whereas Almighty God declares that his people "are a peculiar people." They are peculiar in their principles, peculiar in their conduct, peculiar in their amusements, if so called; they are peculiar in their joys and in their sorrows, peculiar in their deaths, and (according to the intention of the Church) in their burials, as they will be in their resurrection, their award at the judgment day, and their eternal state.

(2.) We encounter another class of apologies, such as the "need of exercise." Did any one ever say that this was his own real motive for dancing? "To overcome diffidence in Society." Alas! we fear that this has been too much overcome already. Will Christians be referred in vain to what the Apostle says about "shamefacedness," not perhaps now the best translation of the original word; but the idea is obvious enough, and quite the opposite of that which the dance is commended to cultivate. "Giving ease and grace of carriage and manner." This is another plea in the same class, also frivolous and without any foundation in fact or experience. It does not require a serious refutation. Another, of a little more weight, is, that when asked to join others in this amusement at a party, especially when pressed to do so by the host, it seems discourteous to decline. A considerate Christian will be apt to know beforehand of what character any proposed party is likely to be, and accordingly know whether to accept or

decline the invitation to be there at all. But when members of the Church, whose principles touching pomps and vanities should be known to the communities before whom they have publicly promised to renounce them, and known by something more than profession, when such are invited to parties, so far from being chargeable with rudeness to the host by declining his invitation to dance, he *himself* is guilty not only of discourtesy to his Christian guests, but of violating the rights of hospitality by even *permitting* that which so many Christians are known to have conscientious scruples against countenancing even by their presence.

The above statement of the case, as we have reason to know, has proved quite sufficient for some, and we doubt not will be so to others; though, as was to be expected, those farthest from the truth are hardest to be won. But shall we abandon those who in the midst of light continue in darkness? Are we exonerated from preaching because few sinners are converted by the best sermons? No. And as to such as we cannot reach by the living voice of instruction and remonstrance, we would place the truth before them upon the printed page in the most forcible manner, and despair of none so long as they will read.

Moral suasion is indeed the main instrument for maintaining the purity of the Church, but it is not and never has been the sole instrument. When persuasion fails, resort must be had to warning, judicial admonition, suspension from the communion, excommunication. And where is this process of warning to begin? Evi-

dently with those in the highest office of the Church; else what are they there for? *

But our Bishops have faithfully discharged their duty herein, both in Council and from Church to Church. In his address to the Council of 1872, Bishop Johns says, "the most offensive inconsistencies specified consist in indulging in that lascivious mode of promiscuous dancing called the round dance, a demoralizing dissipation, disgusting to the delicacy of a refined taste, and shocking to the sensibilities of the renewed mind. This scandal is not to be tolerated in the Church of Christ."

If all other expedients fail, he adds, "decided discipline must be exercised." To this the Council responded by an affirmative resolution declaring it the duty of "ministers faithfully to execute the canons bearing upon the subject, and to discountenance and *restrain*" the practice alluded to.

But are Christians only to cease from that which the world itself—more candid by condemning what it practices—declares to be of such brazen immodesty as to scorn all Christian profession? Have they no perception of the connection between the less exciting and the more exciting forms of this vice? Do they not see how generally the one has now come to resolve itself into the other; or the worthlessness of the distinction

* In this connection we gratefully acknowledge our indebtedness to Dr. Coxe, Bishop of the Diocese of Western New York, for his outspoken and timely admonitions of current abuses in the Church touching doctrine, discipline and worship. It is by such fidelity, regardless of the currents of popular opinion, that we are to look for the preservation of the purity of the Church.

in *principle* between Ahab, who serves Baal a little, and Jehu, who serves him much?

But if they do not, and if upon a comparison of the teachings of Holy Scripture with the facts in the case no conviction ensues, and no incompatibility is discovered between dancing and a Christian profession, and no cause for censure when those who practice it are admitted to the communion, then we have no more to say.

There is no basis or acknowledged principles in common, on which to conduct such argument. Any spiritual sensibility will give warning long before those excesses are reached which are incompatible with sentiments of virtue. Where the new life in Christ is wanting, reformatations will be but external and prudential, not inward—in form, not in principle—submitted to from the force of law, or pastoral persuasion, not chosen through the work of the Spirit—saving some scandal to the Church; but acting from the will of man and not from the will of God, his blessing will not rest upon any such obedience.

In conversion, the soul acquires a new faculty of judgment, which detects the errors of education, many of them instantly, as we see in persons converted from heathenism, which masters the prejudices of a lifetime, and sets itself against public opinion, and reverses the decisions of society quite in advance of sermons, arguments or books, for love runs before reason.

Still we do not forget that the divine life which supervenes upon conversion, with its new spiritual perceptions, may be vigorous or weak, that it is subject to

cultivation, to revivals and decay, and theoretically to extinction, and hence our labors with the weak, the uninstructed, the stubborn, the slow of heart to believe. In this work we might repeat the arguments of Bishops Meade, McIlvaine and Hopkins, and what has been so often and forcibly said by other writers about the dangers to health from exposure, the passing from heated rooms, with a flushed and heated person, into the cold and dampness of night, and the consequent exchange of the ball room for the death chamber, the interruption of useful studies and of the order of families, the incitements to personal vanity and display, the restless and dissipated habits so often engendered by this amusement, all of which is sound and conclusive. We might cite numerous incidental facts, which are often the quickest arguments to those who have the quickness to perceive their application; *e. g.*, How comes it that the very name of a "dance house" is suggestive of degradation? How comes it that dancing masters, like play actors, could never gain access to the best society, even of those who patronized their profession? How comes it that so many have changed their views or their professions upon this subject, in circumstances of danger or of sorrow? What is the import of that well authenticated case of the mother who "could not see the harm of dancing," "could see no force in the objections to it," "wished to see them if she could," encouraged her daughter in the practice, attended her to the ball to enjoy the admiration which she would win, and when in the ardor of the performance the daughter was struck with death, begged that

she might be taken out of the ball room? As life was ebbing fast, she became more urgent, and said "If my child must die, for God's sake do not let her die in the ball room." "Where shall we take her?" "Anywhere," she said, "but here." But according to her former professions what could be the special incongruity of death in a ball room? What new truth had reached her mind? Nay, rather what had been her better, but suppressed convictions all the time? Yes, there is a secret judgment upon this subject, contradicted it may be in words, but often speaking out unbidden. Sometimes upon the bed of death, sometimes in times of general awakening. Under such circumstances we have heard the voluntary confession made with tears, that under instruction conscience had testified with the preacher, and testified to the insincere excuses for their vanity and folly, and testified against the places of its indulgence, from which, by common consent, religion must be excluded. And shall old converts have less sensibility to sin than new ones?

If, then, in this connection it can be asked "what harm is there in *children's* dancing and in Christian parents sending their children to dancing schools? we answer, if you admit the practice to be of unchristian tendency at *any* age, you settle the question. Why foster in childhood the tastes which in age lead so many into sin? *Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.*

In this, as in other parts of this address, we have a right to expect of our Christian brethren that they will neither represent nor understand us as seeing all this

evil in the *literal* dancing. Would that this were separable (if any wish it) from the general injuriousness of its occasions, the unspiritualizing associations, and generally irreligious atmosphere of the places of its performance. But what avails it to separate in theory what has never yet been separated in practice?

In connection with all that has now been said, we have but to submit a single fact, and with this conclude our address. If it be as stated, it must be conclusive of the moral argument. It is this. In the lives of the saints there is no record of one, man or woman, who was a dancer. And by saints we mean all those, living or dead, who have illustrated their religion, accredited it to the world as true, who have given character to the Church, and made it a power against the world, the flesh and the devil. We appeal to history, and call upon you for a single name identified with the propagation of the gospel, or ever called in connection with the advancement of the kingdom of God, who was a dancer. We appeal to your own observation. You never knew such an one, you do not know one now who is of reputation for a devout life. A few indeed have been found who cite exceptions or supposed exceptions, but their opinion is not sustained by such facts as are *really distinguishing* of true religion, or by the opinions of those most capable of forming a true judgment.

And now in all this are you unable to see at least a probable case of INCOMPATIBILITY, and so determinative of the conduct of every Christian? And have you nothing to oppose to all this but your *non-knowledge* and your *non-ability* "to see," setting yourself against

history, against the testimony of the Church in all ages, and of its living ministers and teachers, supported as they are by such a host of illustrative facts! Where, we must ask in amazement, where is at least humility! Has it utterly failed among our young communicants, from the catalogue of Christian graces? Will they separate themselves in opinion and practice from the company of the faithful, and insist upon walking close up to the line of prohibition, inducing the just belief that though their feet may be on one side their hearts are on the other? Let them know that it is impossible for them to walk thus related to those on each side of this line, so as not to be injurious to both. No man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, but either living or dying he helps or hinders the Lord's cause.

It is not without a sense of humiliation that we feel obliged to linger upon these low grounds, especially with any who by this time should have left "poms and vanities" far behind them in their race for the crown of life. If unable to free yourselves from bondage to these elements of the world, renounced at the very beginning of the Christian life, how can you hope to overcome the subtler forms of sin, or contend successfully with spiritual wickedness in the high places of the soul? *If thou hast run with footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?*

Let us entreat you, then, neither to participate in these things nor apologize for them, or countenance them

by your presence; but flee from them and from all the tempters thereto, like Joseph from the Egyptian seducer; as you would not be of disputed and doubtful piety, even in the world's judgment; as you would set an example which he who shall preach your funeral sermon may exhort all to follow; as you would have the testimony of a good conscience and boldness in the day of judgment, and make sure of being numbered with the saints in glory everlasting.

But we stop not here. We also ask you to sustain *us* who are laboring for your salvation, as also for theirs who are yet in the gall of bitterness and bonds of iniquity; to hold up our hands in the discharge of duties so responsible and so difficult, not only by your example, but by your voice and testimony borne boldly for the cause, whenever circumstances call for it or opportunity offers. We Christian brethren, inheritors with you of the common salvation, are chiefly desirous, both for ourselves and our people, that we may walk worthy of our high calling. Why should we aspire to anything less than sanctification, to be free from all sin, waiting for the coming of the Lord, holding ourselves in a posture of serious expectation against that day when we shall dwell with him and reign with him, glorified in his glory and rejoicing in his joy. And as toward the world without, why should we aspire to anything less than freedom from the very appearance of evil, and to have it said of us with truth, AMONG WHOM YE SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD, HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE.

Almighty God, who showest to them that are in error

the light of thy truth, to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness, grant unto all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may avoid those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Calling on you to join us in the continued offering of this prayer, we are most affectionately your friends and pastors in Christ,

C. W. ANDREWS,
C. E. AMBLER,
W. C. MEREDITH,
HENDERSON SUTER,
W. D. HANSON,
T. F. MARTIN,
WM. T. LEAVELL,

J. R. JONES,
W. H. MEADE,
R. M. BAKER,
JAMES GRAMMER,
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A. W. WEDDELL,
GEORGE S. MAY.

